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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUEAHL/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 LAGOS 000199

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

ZAGREB FOR AMBASSADOR BRADTKE
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: TRIP REPORT: AKWA IBOM INVESTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE,
PDP CHAIRMAN PUSHES DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

REF: LAGOS 22

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (B) and (D)
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¶1. (SBU) Summary. Akwa Ibom, an oil-producing state in the Niger Delta, is building an airport, an independent power plant, underground water channels, and a tourism sector to develop the state and attract private investment. The People's Democratic Party politically dominates Akwa Ibom. PDP state Chairman Otu Ita Toyo claimed to have conducted a transparent, democratic gubernatorial primary. On January 30, the Speaker of the House Assembly told Poloff the state's legislative branch needed more autonomy from the governor. An NGO decried rampant human rights violations in the jails of the state. End Summary.

AKWA IBOM INVESTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE TO SPUR DEVELOPMENT

¶2. (SBU) Governor Victor Attah of Akwa Ibom State has undertaken numerous development projects, most beginning the last of his eight years in office, the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Esang Efiang, told Poloff on January 29. U.S. company DynCorp is constructing an airport in Uyo, the

state capital; the airport's first terminal is slated to open in April. This airport will be competitive with others in southern Nigeria because it will be the first with a maintenance hangar, Efiong said. Other development projects include underground channels to bring water into Uyo as well as an independent power project (IPP). The IPP is expected to supply the state with uninterrupted power by May 29. The plant will supply 70 megawatts of dedicated power to Akwa Ibom, and a surplus 115 megawatts to the national grid. Efiong was confident the IPP would improve development and the state's economy.

13. (SBU) Additionally, the opening of a five star beachside resort with golf course is slated to occur in February and will primarily cater to expatriate oil workers from Bonny Island and Port Harcourt. This resort will be managed by the French-owned Meridian Accor. (Comment: This project likely has raised more than a few eyebrows locally. Spending on a luxury resort when most citizens struggle for the basics seems incongruous. Also, given the turmoil in the Niger Delta, there are fewer expatriate oil workers to serve as a pool of clients and fewer of those workers will be likely to leave the security of their compounds to traipse around a golf course elsewhere in the Delta. End Comment.)

14. (SBU) Director General Celestine Okpokpong of the Akwa Ibom Investment Industrial Promotion Council (AKIIPIC) under the Office of the Governor, told Poloff January 31 the state's efforts to attract private investment first focused on developing infrastructure. The Independent Power Plant (IPP) currently under construction will improve the state's investment climate. The IPP is the only project in the state not driven by the private sector; he said the state hopes eventually to privatize it. Okpokpong also said Akwa Ibom is heavily investing in road infrastructure.

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15. (SBU) Approximately USD 67.5 million has been invested in the CelTel communication network which now provides mobile phone service to 90 percent of Akwa Ibom, Okpokpong proudly announced. A private venture refinery to add value to state-produced oil has been negotiated with a German partner.

PDP CANDIDATE IS DELEGATES' CHOICE

16. (C) Otu Ita Toyo, Chairman of the Akwa Ibom People's Democratic Party (PDP), told Poloff on January 30, he has made decisions, sometimes unpopular within government and with party members, to bring a more democratic process to the state party. Toyo described himself as a "total chairman" seeking to remind politicians and party members that political leaders have to be held accountable to their constituents. Obong Godswill Akpabio, former Commissioner of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs under Governor Attah and former Director of Corporate Affairs for a wireless Nigerian telecommunications company, won the highest number of votes during the primary elections. However, "big men" such as Governor Attah and his son-in-law, Udoma Ekarika, who expected Ekarika to win, contested the announcement. They argued a consensus candidate should be announced because Akpabio did not win over 50 percent of the votes cast and he hails from the same senatorial zone as Governor Attah. (Ref) (Note: After some debate between national and state PDP, the 45 year old Akpabio was accepted by the National PDP as the party's gubernatorial candidate in Akwa Ibom and subsequently received Governor Attah's public blessing. End Note.)

17. (C) Toyo said he was proud to have conducted a democratic convention; whether the elected candidate is supported by the party's big wigs is a different matter. He lamented Nigeria does not yet have the political culture to produce leaders focused on development. Toyo commented "oil has made

everybody lazy." However, he was also confident young Nigerians would be able to force change once they chose to take charge of their futures.

¶18. (C) Toyo commented that the PDP is not perfect, but is the best of the available political parties. Toyo is unaware of any political party with the organizational strength or political platforms to rival those of the PDP. The splintering of PDP members that resulted in the Action Congress (AC) is merely a power struggle, he said, rather than a vehicle for change. A former labor union activist, Toyo conceded the labor party could match the quality of the PDP's platform, but not its organizational strength.

HOUSE SPEAKER WANTS FINANCIAL AUTONOMY AND LESS TURNOVER

¶19. (SBU) The Speaker of the Akwa Ibom State House Assembly, Nelson Efiong, told Poloff on January 30 that the legislative and judicial branches need financial independence from the state executive. The House's dependence on the Governor for

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funding limits legislative freedom, he said. Efiong estimated 50 percent of the bills passed by the House are initiated internally while 50 percent come from the executive. High turnover is one of the greatest challenges facing House members, Efiong related. This is partly due to constituencies viewing assemblymen as self-serving representatives and partly due to high turnover within the PDP.

NGO DECRIES HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

¶10. (SBU) Nsikak Ibanga, a lawyer with the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL), told Poloff on January 30 the Niger Delta is rife with human rights violations. Conflict among the oil companies, government, and communities is the cause of these violations, Ibanga chided. Oil production has polluted the environment and when communities request assistance from oil companies, the military and police are brought in.

¶11. (SBU) The trial system and prisons are deplorable. Individuals arrested on petty theft charges can be imprisoned for years without trial, Ibanga said. He was exasperated by the number of falsely accused still in prison. While IHRHL aids individuals who cannot afford legal representation, there are simply not enough attorneys to handle the cases awaiting trial, Ibanga said. Even if one can obtain legal counsel, bail is not only expensive but requires documents such as proof of residence and proof of landed property, which many defendants do not have, he lamented.

¶12. (SBU) Ibanga described many Nigerians as being disillusioned with the elections and voter registration. He believes many Nigerians would not have bothered to register if the government had not required voter cards as a precondition to receive salaries and access bank accounts.

COMMENT

¶13. (SBU) Akwa Ibom appears to have made some headway in developing infrastructure and attracting private investment, albeit during the twilight of Governor Attah's tenure. The PDP Chairman's efforts to conduct an open vote to determine the gubernatorial candidate has been more the exception than the rule for the PDP and other parties as well. With the PDP facing no apparent opposition in the state, it would seem that the PDP gubernatorial candidate will win and that the party can expect to carry the state in the presidential

election. However, outgoing Governor Attah fumed after having been pressured to withdraw from the presidential primary at the last minute. His wound suppurated when his son-in-law was denied the gubernatorial nod. A long-time ally of Action Congress presidential candidate Vice President Atiku, Attah could conceivably toss his influence toward the AC at the last minute. While he has been wounded, Attah still has considerable pull. If he goes for this switch, he could make the race in Akwa Ibom a dramatic one. End Comment.

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